NYT

9/9/63 p. 39

Cuba Holds 4 on Downed Plane; Questions Costa Rican on Raids

HAVANA, Sept. 15 (AP)—The Government announced today that it was holding a Costa Rican, his American wife and two Nicaraguans after forcing their plane down in southeastern Cuba with antiaircraft fire.

The newspaper El Mundo said Teodoro Picado Jr., son of a former Costa Rican President, was being questioned to determine whether he had taken part in counterrevolutionary raids on Cuba.

The paper said the authorities had determined that Mr. Picado, a friend of the Somoza family of Nicaragua, was an arms supplier for Cuban exiles in Central America. Mr. Picado was trained at the United States Military Academy. His wife is the former Susan Moir of Glendale, Calif.

El Mundo said Mr. Picado was linked to Gen. Anastasio Somoza Jr., chief of the Nicaraguan National Guard and brother of the former Nicaraguan President Luis Somoza. It said the plane was owned by General Somoza.

The newspaper said the plane had been forced down after flying low over the Cuban coastal city of Cienfuegos, 150 miles southeast of Havana, last Wednesday. The paper made no mention of the plane's having been hit.

It quoted Mr. Picado as having said he had been forced to fly his four-engine craft over Cuba to avoid a storm on a flight from British Honduras to Miami.

Others aboard the plane were identified as Emilia Bonilla, secretary to General Somoza, and Ramón Jacinto Herrera Córdoba.

"Cuban authorities have been unable to determine whether they [the passengers] have any participation in the trip Picado made to buy arms, and they would be only occasional travelers," El Mundo said. "Cuban authorities are continuing the investigation to determine if Picado has had any participation in recent pirate attacks on Cuba."

The newspaper said Mr. Picado had studied with Mr. Somoza at West Point "and is his partner in a muddy business."

The paper also said Mr. Picado carried a checkbook bearing the name Somoza.

"After questioning and confiscation of documents," it added, "Cuban authorities believe Picado was under Somoza's orders to supply arms to counterrevolutionary groups operating in Central America."

El Mundo also reported that a Cuban agent trained by the Pentagon had been executed by a firing squad. It identified him as Benjamin Acosta Valdes and said the execution was carried out yesterday.

The newspaper said Acosta Valdes had been seized while sending information by radio to an espionage center in Miami. It charged that he had been sent to Cuba by the Pentagon to obtain information about defenses.

Cousin Says Group Is Well

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica, Sept. 15 (AP)—All the occupants of a private two-engine plane apparently forced to land in Cuba during a flight to Miami were reported to be in good condition today.

The report came from René Picardo Esquival, a cousin of the plane's pilot, who arrived here today from Managua, Nicaragua. The pilot and the passengers were in a hotel and would be allowed to leave Cuba, but he did not know when.

Picado Led Costa Rican Coup

Many Cubans opposed to Premier Fidel Castro are believed to be operating from Nicaragua, which lies about 500 miles southwest of Cuba.

Mr. Picado was a leader of a revolt against President José Figueres in Costa Rica in January, 1955. With United States support, Mr. Figueres won.

Mr. Figueres succeeded Mr. Picado's father in the Presidency in 1948 after a civil war.

Mr. Picado was in the United States at this time. He attended Herbert Hoover High School in Glendale, Calif., and later went to West Point. He was graduated in June, 1951, and he married Miss Moir that August.